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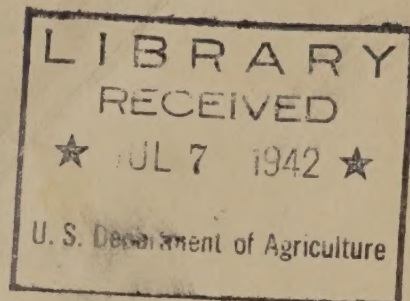
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For Review



NEW GROUND FARMERS IN THE MISSISSIPPI

RIVER DELTA

by

Harold Hoffsommer

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NEW GROUND FARMERS IN THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER DELTA

(A Social Study of 500 Former Cotton Tenants and Croppers)

Harold Hoffsommer

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NEW GROUND FARMERS IN THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER DELTA  
(A Social Study of 500 Former Cotton Tenants and Croppers)<sup>1/</sup>

Harold Hoffsommer

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to give information relative to tenants and croppers who have recently become separated from cotton farms and plantations; (2) to present a picture of those of this group who are now attempting to adjust their situation by farming for themselves on small farms in the cutover, new land areas of the upper Mississippi Delta.<sup>2/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> The earlier parts of this study, including the collection and tabulation of schedule data, were financed by the Division of Social Research, Works Progress Administration, during the period that the author was Louisiana State Supervisor of Rural Research for this organization. The study was carried to completion by the Louisiana State University Experiment Station.

S. Earl Grigsby, Assistant State Supervisor of Rural Research of the Division of Research, Works Progress Administration, supervised the field work in the collection of the original data, supervised the machine tabulation, and made valuable suggestions throughout the conduct of the study based on his intimate knowledge of social conditions in this area.

Julien R. Tatum, Research Assistant at the Louisiana State University Experiment Station, helped to collect and analyze the data and to prepare the final manuscript.

<sup>2/</sup> Problems of community organization and cooperation among these settlers is to be the subject of a later report.



The number of these disconnected farm families moving into the upper Delta area of Louisiana, Mississippi and Arkansas is steadily increasing. Up to the present this movement has had little or no guidance although direction is badly needed if the worst features of haphazard and uncontrolled settlement are to be avoided. It is hoped that the information herewith presented may be of value in the formulation of constructive policies for the area.



### Background and Scope of the Study

It was the intention at the outset of the study to secure information, on a sample basis, of all tenants and laborers who had become separated from cotton farms and plantations, for whatever reason, during the period 1930-1938. The areas to be given especial consideration were the Delta, Red River and hill areas of north Louisiana. The general purpose was to find out who left these farms, how they subsequently made living and something of their present social condition. In proceeding with the study, however, it proved practically impossible to sample in relative numbers the families who were unemployed, working on governmental relief, those who had gotten industrial or other types of jobs, and those who had gone to other sections of the country. On the other hand, the greatest single congregation of these families appeared to be on the upper Mississippi River Delta where settlement had taken place on small tracts of cutover timber land.

After investigation it appeared that these families were at least partially representative of all those tenant and laborer families who became separated from farms during this period. Accordingly, 500 of these settler families were interviewed during the period January through June, 1939. The interviews were carried on with the use of schedules and were distributed over the 7 parishes in which most of the settlement had taken place (table 1). This sample of 500 families is assumed to represent in part a cross section of the so-called displaced agricultural workers and at the same time to give an insight into a significant type of agricultural adjustment.



### Depression Settlement

Settlement of the cutover lands in the Mississippi River Delta is being brought about by two complementary forces: Factors that have compelled people to discontinue their former agricultural relationships and factors that have caused them to settle in this particular area.

Increased efficiency in agricultural production, partial loss of world markets, soil erosion, disappearance of the old agricultural frontier, urban unemployment and problems of land tenure underlie much of the present agricultural displacement. In general these factors tend to release labor from agricultural employment without furnishing other adequate outlets, thus causing an oversupply of agricultural labor and widespread impoverishment. The immediate causes of this impoverishment may be ascribed to problems of farm labor, share cropping, sub-marginal or drought stricken land, too small farms, inadequate employment of young people, technological unemployment or what not, but the families caught in these meshes are definitely disadvantaged and may be expected in some way to try to improve their situations. One possible avenue which has appeared to the people living in the vicinity of the upper Mississippi Delta is that of settlement on the nearby cutover poorly drained lands. This, to be sure, is a questionable venture, but it provides a place to go where they at least can work in the attempt to make a living for themselves and their families (figure " .



### New Ground Settlement

The settlement of cutover lands in the north Louisiana Delta area has occurred at such a rate in recent years as to constitute a definite movement. New ground is the accepted term among the farmers of the area which applies to the land which has not been farmed before or which has been out of cultivation long enough to have grown up in timber. Settlement, although general throughout the Delta parishes is considerably more concentrated in certain parishes than others (tables 2 and 13).

Due partially to advertising by the lumber companies and partially to the increased number of families seeking new homes, the movement has received its greatest impetus since 1935. It is impossible to know accurately the number of families that have settled in the area but the number is increasing constantly. The following estimate is given for the parishes in northeast Louisiana after consulting various people and sources: East Carroll, 600; West Carroll, 1000; Richland, 1000; Madison, 300; Tensas, 250; making a total of 3150. Although no measure is as yet available which would indicate the number of families which may be absorbed, it is agreed by those familiar with the situation that the present settlement is but a beginning of the future development.

Generally, the new ground settlers have occupied the more inaccessible lands, and those which for reasons of location, drainage, cover, or other characteristics, either of the land itself or of its ownership, have been left undeveloped. Usually these settlement areas



are separated from the main highways by the established plantations, the most favorably located being along the bayous and the local parish roads. The land for which these people have contracted is, almost without exception, covered with stumps, second growth timber and thick growths of under-brush, and presents drainage as well as clearance problems.

### The Role of the Lumber Company

The land upon which the new ground settlement is being made is almost without exception, land belonging to a number of lumber companies which have been operating during recent years in the areas. Owning extensive holdings from which commercial timber has been largely stripped, these firms have been faced with the problem of finding the profitable way to use these lands. Although for years occasional landless farmers in the South have purchased low-priced, cutover lands, or squatted on them without benefit of purchase, it is only recently that the settlement of these lands has become more extensive. Realizing the value of these lands for farming purposes and at the same time realizing the economic condition of prospective purchasers, the lumber companies have opened their holdings for settlement and advertised for buyers. Some indication of the success of these companies in their land office business may be gathered from the report of one such concern operating in West Carroll parish which shows the sale of 430 new ground farms during the period 1934 to 1938.



Fundamental in this situation is the land itself which is for the most part fertile Delta land and which is not now being utilized. Since it is taxed and not bringing in an income, the lumber companies were willing to contract with farmers for small sections of this land on terms that were attractive enough to draw settlers from a comparatively wide area. From the standpoint of the lumber company these terms were reasonable enough to attract settlers, yet such as to protect their investment value and to relieve them of the burden of taxation. Contracts were devised which would meet these necessary specifications. Since the land was now valuable only as farm lands, clauses were inserted requiring the yearly clearing of a specified acreage. The work of clearing is usually substituted for the first payments on the land, thus relieving the settler from this burden. On the other hand it obviously increases the value of the land.

Besides selling the incoming farmers the land, the lumber companies also furnished them lumber with which to build their homes. The same general terms were given on the purchasing of lumber as on land. These terms included interest charges as well as a definite length of time in which to complete payment.

In some cases, the lumber company has served as a credit agency as well as a land company. The company either furnished families from the company store or worked in cooperation with some firm acting as furnishing merchant. In one instance at least, the lumber company agent decided upon the amount of monthly furnish to be granted by a merchant, the two firms agreeing upon which should receive first pay-



ment when the cotton was sold at the end of the year. Some of the lumber companies hired the men during the fall and winter months, so they had a chance to earn a supplementary income, and at the same time the company had a constant supply of labor.

The attitudes and activities of the lumber companies in their relations to the settlers vary greatly. Some of them have shown considerable interest in the successful organization of settlement communities and offer to furnish plots of ground and half the lumber for building schools and churches. One of the companies interested itself in the construction and grading of roads in the settlements, going so far as to furnish part of the labor and materials in this improvement program.

Whether or not the motives for these developments are altruistic, it is evident that the settlers have benefited greatly from such policies, and that at least some of the firms are genuinely interested in the welfare of their clients. At the same time, such developments are good business policies for the lumber companies should they resell the land at a later date.



## MOBILITY OF NEW GROUND FAMILIES

### Location of Last Farm

It is difficult to trace accurately the pattern of migration of the new ground families, yet some indications as to their movements can be given. Generally speaking, these families had last lived either within the area where settlement is now occurring, or adjacent to it (table 3). This situation is rather to be expected since the land is more accessible to them and because they have had a better chance of being informed of the opportunities which exist. Negroes particularly, come from nearby, less than one out of ten having come from without the area of settlement.

An interesting situation is observed in studying the location of the last plantation of the families migrating from Mississippi. In the light of the fact that the Mississippi River presents a tangible barrier, it may be observed that the counties from which the families migrated are grouped about the points of entrance into Louisiana. The main gateways are the ferry just below Greenville in Washington County, the bridge at Vicksburg in Warren County, and the ferry at Natchez in Adams County. Somewhat similarly, the counties in Arkansas from which migrants came are located adjacent or near to the Louisiana parishes of settlement. Considering proximity and also the affinity of Delta people for Delta land, it is not surprising that 75 per cent of the settlers have come from the Delta country. Migrants from the lower Red River Valley find less of an actual change in type of farming than do the migrants from the bordering hills.



### Place of Birth of Head of Family

A further indication as to the mobility of the settlers is found in the location of the place of birth of the family head (table 4).

The majority were born in Louisiana, and nearly half of the total were born in Delta country. The whites migrated greater distances than the Negroes; over three-fourths of the Negroes were born in Delta parishes.

Most of those born outside of Louisiana, were born either in Mississippi or in Arkansas. A very few came from other states.

These observations hold in general for both whites and Negroes. Fewer of the Negroes, however, were born outside of the State, indicating again that the migrations of the Negroes were shorter than those of the whites.

### Place of Birth of Parents

Although the migration of the parents of new ground settlers from their birthplaces to the areas where the settlers were born has little effect upon the pattern of migration of their children as such, it probably has some influence. In the first place, parent-migrational tendencies point toward the existence of behavior patterns which, if not actually influencing migration in subsequent generations, at least would not usually make for "sets" in the minds of the offspring which would act as a deterrent factor in their migration.

In the second place, the migrational tendencies of the parent generation suggests the possibility of an economic group which, in order to hunt for chances to improve its welfare moved from place to place. The parent group consisted largely of croppers, share renters and cash renters whose financial situations in the South are not usually very secure and who move about considerably.



As should be expected, a definite contrast is found in comparing the birthplace of the new ground settlers and that of their parents (table 5). Several observations are worthwhile: (1) Markedly fewer parents were born inside of the settlement area itself. (2) More of the parents came from hill regions. (3) A much larger number of parents came from Mississippi, and from other states to the east and north. (4) The parents migrated longer distances than did their sons. (5) The actual change in type of farming area was greater in the case of the parents, the sons coming almost entirely from Delta and hill cotton country.

#### Number of Years Spent on Last Plantation

An indication of the extent to which the new ground farmers are in the habit of migration may be made on the basis of the number of years spent on the last plantation of residence (table 6). Most of them stayed on this plantation for four years or less. Negroes stayed longer on the average than whites, although the extremes of length of residence were greatest among the Negroes.

From the standpoint of tenure status the former croppers stayed on the previous plantation for a relatively shorter period than the higher tenure groups. This is further confirmed by the number of years which these settlers usually remained on any one plantation, the most common period being two years (table 7). Most of the settlers had never lived longer than from three to five years on a given plantation, with the Negroes remaining a little longer than the whites (table 8). The maximum time cropper settlers had spent on any one plantation was less than that for the higher tenure groups.



### Date of Separation from Last Plantation

Although the time at which family heads were separated from the last plantation on which they worked indicates little of the actual pattern of mobility, it does present some information as to the length of time during which the new ground area has been undergoing settlement, since a majority of the families moved directly into the area.

It would appear that some settlement occurred prior to 1930, though the settlement since that time has been intensified. Of the 429 persons from whom this information was secured, an increasingly large number of settlers left their former locations toward the latter part of the thirties, 19 leaving in 1934 and 126 in 1937-38. There appear to be no significant racial differences regarding this particular phase of the study (table 9).

### Tenure Status on Last Plantation

Of the 500 settlers interviewed nearly two-thirds were formerly croppers,<sup>3/</sup> and the remainder share and cash tenants,<sup>4/</sup> the cash tenants comprising only a very small number. In keeping with the tenure

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<sup>3/</sup> It is entirely possible that a number of these croppers worked during a part of the time as wage laborers.

<sup>4/</sup> The terms as used here follow the traditional meanings as understood by the settlers themselves. The questions were simply put to the individuals and answered by them without previous definition or discussion. The tenure categories used are: Croppers, share tenants, and cash renters.



status as between Negroes and whites a greater proportion of the Negro settlers had been croppers and fewer had been cash tenants. Approximately one-half of the fathers of the settlers had been croppers and one-third had been owners. Fathers of the white settlers had a higher tenure status than those of the Negro settlers. Only a third of the white fathers had been croppers, and nearly a half had been owners. On the other hand nine out of ten of the fathers of the Negro settlers had been croppers (table 11). Comparison of father's and son's tenure status shows that four out of ten of the white cropper settler's fathers were croppers and nine out of ten of the Negroes (table 12).

Among others, two explanations suggest themselves as being important factors in comparing the tenure status of the settlers and that of their fathers. In the first place, cropper and share tenant fathers have little or no surplus funds with which to stake their sons in their first farming venture.<sup>5/</sup> Consequently, these young men must enter farming in a capacity which demands little or no equipment or work stock--in other words, they begin farming as croppers or wage hands. A second factor is associated with supervision. Farm management is a learned process. Owners' sons are able to manage a farm, not necessarily because of intellectual endowment, but because they have had the opportunity to learn necessary techniques. A tenant or cropper is able to teach his son only such farming procedures as he

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<sup>5/</sup> Naturally, this also applies to many small farm owners as well as croppers and share tenants.



has been taught or has had the chance to learn. Ordinarily the techniques of farm management are not part of the procedures taught such farm workers. Consequently, the cropper's son, for example, is at a distinct disadvantage and stands a good chance not to advance further in tenure status than his father. Lack of knowledge and practice of managerial functions is one of the factors which operates to the disadvantage of many of the new ground settlers and makes their present situation even more precarious than it might otherwise be.



## THE NEW GROUND FARM FAMILY

### Race and Nativity

The attempt to interview the races in proportionate numbers resulted in 400 white and 100 Negro interviews, which probably represents approximately the proportion of the two races among the settlers. There are Negro families and occasional Negro communities scattered through the various parishes, but the larger Negro settlement appears to have been in East Carroll Parish. The racial differential seems to be the result of the attempt of the lumber companies to sell the land to white families when possible. The preponderance of whites may also result from the usual preference by Delta planters for Negro rather than white tenants and laborers. In the case of East Carroll Parish, however, much of the land is of such quality as to require a great deal of the very hard physical labor to cultivate it. It has been suggested that Negroes make better customers under such conditions.

There appears to be little difference in nativity between the recently settled whites and the established white families. Both groups are largely native white of native born parentage and preponderately of English, Irish, and Scotch descent.

### Age and Sex Composition

In discussing the age and sex composition of the population of the new ground area, the background of comparison is that of the total population of the parishes bordering on the Mississippi River.



The youthfulness of the population is particularly striking, 53 per cent of the males and 48 per cent of the females being under 20 years of age. This large proportion of young people may be explained somewhat by the extreme rurality of the population, and by the relatively small proportion of persons over 55 years of age in the group. Similar age groups in the population of the Delta parishes contain 41 per cent and 42 per cent of the population respectively. The Delta population, however, includes village groups as well as the Delta planter group and so might be expected to contain a smaller proportion of young people.

Another significant aspect of the new ground population is the smallness of the male group 20-25 years of age. The explanation of this is found largely in the age composition of the population. Since there are relatively few people in the upper age groups, few children over 20 years of age would be expected. Then, too, by the time young men have reached the age of twenty and twenty-one they have presumably left their families and have gone out on their own. At any rate, only a relatively few of them either have remained with their families or have taken up new ground land for themselves.

Almost twice as many females as males of age 20-25 are found in the area. Presumably many of these are the wives of men 25 years old and older.

The bulk of the heads of the new ground families are in the age groups from 35 to 54. These make up almost one-fourth of the male population, which is slightly in excess of the male population of these age groups in the Delta population.



No person was reported, either male or female, over 75 years of age. The conditions in the area, especially the extreme severity of the work needed to bring the land into cultivation, may account for this. In addition, aged parents of the settlers may be less likely to live with their children under these circumstances of hardship.

There are some racial differences in the population of the area to which attention should be called. There are relatively fewer Negro children than white between the ages of five and twenty. The difference is greater in the group 15-19 than in the other ages and could possibly be accounted for by Negroes leaving home at an earlier age than the whites. This is particularly true of the Negro girls since they are able to find work in domestic service at an early age. There are relatively more Negro women than white between 20 and 34 years of age, probably resulting from a greater proportion of younger married women.

Several factors are affected by the distribution of the population in the new ground area. One of the most evident is the need for educational facilities made necessary by the influx of families with large numbers of children into hitherto undeveloped sections of parishes. New schools will have to be built in the new communities or transportation facilities made available to old ones. In many of the communities roads will have to be built in order to get school buses in and out.

Another factor which is affected is the labor on the farm. The large number of children may provide a considerable economic asset to their parents. The youth of the entire group (57 per cent of the males are between the ages of 15 and 54) is also of great importance in the light of the severity of conditions with which the settlers are faced.



### Marital Condition and Fertility Ratio

Almost all of the heads of the new ground families are married. Of the 500 families studied, only 22 family heads, 17 white and 5 Negro, were not married at the time of the interview. Of the total, 16 men were without wives (14 white, 2 Negro) and 6 women were without husbands (3 white, 3 Negro). Whether these unmarried persons were single, widowed, or divorced is not known.

With the large proportion of the women of the new ground area married, a relatively high fertility ratio might be expected. A comparison of the fertility ratios with the Delta population as a whole, however, reveals but little difference (table 14). On the other hand it is significant that the fertility ratio of the races is more nearly equal among the settler families than among the Delta families. In the Delta as a whole the white ratio is 717 as compared with 446 for the Negroes. In the new ground area the Negro ratio is substantially above that of the whites.

### Size of Household

Since most of the work of the new ground farm is done by hand, the size of the family becomes a matter of considerable importance. It would appear that most of the children are too young to be of any considerable help in the heavy work of clearing the new land. As a matter of fact, this is work that could best be done by heavy machinery, but such will probably remain unavailable to the settlers until they can form cooperative associations for this purpose.



Roughly one out of six of these families have but two members, this situation occurring twice as often among the colored as among the white. In general the colored families were smaller than the white, the most frequent size being 4 for the colored and 5 for the white. Essentially all of the families of eight or more were white.

More than a third of the households have three members or less. Under conditions of hand labor three people would not contribute the minimum of workers necessary on an individual farm, especially in view of the tremendous amount of work needed on a new ground farm. This situation probably represents a labor shortage on these particular farms, especially if the third member of the family is a child under twelve-- a not unusual situation considering the age distribution of the area.

In general, it may be assumed that the remainder of the families have a more or less adequate supply of family labor. It should be pointed out, however, that the larger families, especially those composed of over six members, are in an unfavorable position in that the size and condition of the farm unit is such that it makes it very difficult to support a family of such large size.

#### Education

Great stress has been placed upon education as a method of alleviating social and economic evils. Among the problems facing agriculture, the intelligent use of land, the diversification of crops, the more intensive use of home-grown products, especially livestock, and the improvement of standards of diet, housing and health, are felt to be capable of alleviation through education. It is in the light of such possibilities that the educational attainments of the members of new ground families are considered. The emphasis, however, needs to be



on the children, since the time for formal education of the family heads is past.

Although the new ground settlers constitute a group within themselves, they are also a part of the population of the parishes wherein they reside and are necessarily subject to the disabilities of the educational systems of the region and the state. Unfortunately, the South as a whole shows up in a poor light when compared with other sections of the country. It has been pointed out that the extreme rurality of the region, the disproportionate numbers of children of school age, the segregation of racial elements in the population, and the existence of an agricultural system which interferes with the school attendance, are factors which are important in the working of the system as it now exists.<sup>6/</sup> To these must be added such items as a low average daily attendance of pupils, the shortness of the school term in rural areas, the low rate of salary payment for teachers and the corresponding low standards of teacher-training, and the small amount of financial support expended for educational purposes. These factors, barely listed here, all result in an actual as well as a

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<sup>6/</sup> T. J. Woofter, Jr. and others, "Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation," Chapter IX, Education, by Harold Hoffsonner, Works Progress Administration, Division of Social Research, Research Monograph V, Washington, 1936.



relatively low standard of educational activities.<sup>7/</sup>

One out of six of the settler family heads had never attended school of which by far the larger relative proportion were Negro. In fact, nearly 6 out of ten of the Negro heads had had no schooling (table 17). The actual grade-attainment of the settlers shows that more than four out of ten of all the settlers, men and women, are essentially illiterate.<sup>8/</sup> This includes more than 3 out of 10 of the whites and 9 out of 10 of the Negroes. The women for all classes are slightly better educated than the men. Obviously any program which contemplates work with these people must take these educational factors into consideration.

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<sup>7/</sup> The above suggestions apply to the South as a whole. As many of the settlers migrated from different sections of the state and area, they, as well as many of their children, received their education in other sections. A detailed analysis of the type of educational training they received would therefore entail a much wider examination than is within the province of the present study.

<sup>8/</sup> Included in this category are those who have either never attended school or who have not passed beyond the third grade.



## THE NEW GROUND SETTLER'S HOME

### The Farmstead

A specific description of the distribution of the new ground farms could not be given without a detailed account of the farming areas in each of the parishes in which the farms are located. It is sufficient here to state that the majority of the farms in Louisiana are in six of the parishes of the upper Louisiana Delta,<sup>9/</sup> and that the heaviest settlement has probably occurred in East Carroll, Richland, and West Carroll parishes. In general the settlement within a single parish has taken place in the more isolated sections where timber has been cut out fairly recently. Within these cutover areas the settlement has been heaviest along the banks of bayous, and along ridges and roads. Such locations are chosen because of the advantages of natural drainage.

The typical farmstead consists of a small, unpainted, two or three room cottage made of fresh lumber—though the new ones become old looking in a surprisingly short time. Cotton and corn grow in a nearby field in the midst of stumps and dead trees and palmetto. The house stands close to the road, and is surrounded with a small yard in which rests a few pieces of rusting farm equipment. A few chickens, possibly a pig or two, more rarely a cow, wander about the yard and the thick brush nearby. The road itself is fairly new and, in the more recently settled areas, is but rarely graveled. This is the new ground farmstead.

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<sup>9/</sup> Concordia, East Carroll, Madison, Richland, Tensas, West Carroll.

The farms enumerated for this study were taken in these parishes. (table 1)



### Size and Condition of House

Perhaps the most obvious aspect of the new ground farm is the house in which the family lives. When the settlers first took possession of the land, their houses ranged from lean-to's of planks and brush and canvas house-tents to hastily constructed frame shacks. These quarters had few household conveniences, and offered only partial shelter. However, because of the relative mildness of the climate the occupants actually suffered from housing conditions much less than they might have in other sections of the country.

At the present most of these quarters have been replaced by more permanent buildings. These houses correspond to a fairly definite type. They are simple one-story frame houses, unpainted, unsealed, single-walled, and constructed of a rather cheap grade of lumber. In a large number of cases they were built by their occupants, and many of them contain knot-holes and rather large cracks at the door-facings and under doors and windows. The recency of construction can be attested to by casual observation. They are heated by wood fires.

The grounds about the houses are small and usually kept rather indifferently. The garden plots are small and placed close to the house. In some cases government-type sanitary privies were evident, but these were the exception rather than the rule.

A little less than a third of the total two-thirds of the colored families occupy houses which have only one or two rooms (table 24). As the rooms are fairly small, the space in which they live would appear to be barely adequate. Ninety per cent of the Negroes occupy houses of three rooms or less, only two having houses with as many as five rooms.



More of the whites occupy four-room dwellings than any other one size, yet over half of them live in houses of three rooms and less. Less than one out of ten have five rooms or more.

It should be kept in mind that house-space is important only insofar as it serves the needs of the family. The size of the new ground houses should therefore be considered in comparison with the size of the families. Despite the relative smallness of Negro families, it will be at once observed that they are overcrowded. Only ten per cent of their homes have more than three rooms. Since almost thirty per cent of the families are still growing, it may be seen that there will be a constant need for an increase in the size of the houses in order to have even adequate, not to say ample, room for the family members.

Closely connected with the size and condition of houses is the matter of screened and glassed windows. Such a consideration is an indication of the families' level of living, but it also has a bearing upon the health and comfort of the family members. Of the houses studied, thirty per cent had no glassed windows (table 25). The greater number of these families were Negroes, although nearly a fourth of the white families were included in this category. In contrast to those having no windows with glass in them, over half of the white families and nearly a third of the Negro families had all windows glassed.

Perhaps screened windows are important during a longer period of the year than glass windows because of flies and mosquitoes. In



the South and particularly in the low-lying Delta the malaria mosquito is a definite health hazard. There appears to be no way of correcting the high malaria rate as long as the Anopheles mosquito has easy access to both malaria and non-malarial individuals.<sup>9/</sup> With four out of ten of the white and eight out of ten of the colored houses entirely screenless such access is of course relatively easy (table 26). Only a third of the whites and an eighth of the Negroes have all of their windows screened (table 26). This will be recognized as a minimum of protection since almost none of the houses have screened doors. The lack of proper screening is probably the result of poverty, for cash payment for things other than absolute necessities is beyond most of the families.

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9/ No one familiar with the physical conditions in the new ground area can help but appreciate the immensity of the task awaiting the Public Health Service in its work of mosquito control in this district. It has long been recognized that malaria cannot be wiped out without the destruction of its carrier. Yet in such areas the only hope for the control of the disease rests for the present in individual effort through the use of screens and insecticides.



### Home Convenience and Equipment

Few home conveniences are to be expected. Yet a certain amount of home equipment is absolutely necessary to the comfort, and even to the health, of the occupants.

Of primary importance is an adequate source of water. Most of the families have drilled wells and get their water from a hand pump (White, 97 per cent; Negro, 83 per cent). A smaller number have wells in their yards (White, 1 per cent; Negro, 17 per cent). Although there is danger from contamination with these wells, the supply of water is usually adequate and, when protected from surface and sub-surface seepage, is generally satisfactory.

The wood range, of varying size and condition, is universally used throughout the area. While such stoves are hardly conducive to the comfort of the housewife during the summer, they are quite satisfactory and most economical.

The presence of the following items was checked for every household: electricity, screened porch, radio, newspaper, sewing machine, ice box, phonograph, and running water (table 27). Perhaps the most obvious aspect of the result was that so few of the Negroes had any of these comforts. More of them had a sewing machine than any other one item; two had an ice box; one had a screened porch, while eleven subscribed to a newspaper. None had radios.



Among the white families a much larger proportion had one or more of the listed items. More than half subscribed to newspapers, while the next largest number had sewing machines. Over 18 per cent had ice boxes, for they seem almost like a necessity during the long hot summers of the area. Running water, electricity, and radios are almost completely lacking. The fewness of screened porches very probably results in considerable discomfort for the occupants of the home when mosquitoes and hot, still nights make such a convenience highly desirable.

#### The Home Garden

The home garden is of primary importance to these settlers. So far as merely reporting gardens is concerned, all of the families but five (three white, two Negro) had gardens of some sort. As would be expected, however, the value of the gardens to the families varied considerably. The assumption that the mere presence of gardens assured families of a constant food supply would be far from describing the actual situation.

The indices of the value of the garden to the families were used: The number of months during which products are obtained, and the extent to which individual families estimate dependence on the garden for a living. Although neither of these criteria are entirely accurate, they give some idea as to the extent to which the families followed a subsistence type of farming.



As far as actual time during which the gardens are productive is concerned, they show up fairly well. Only a small percentage of the families got garden products less than five months of the year, while more than half of the white families and over three-fourths of the Negro families reported getting produce from 5 to 7 months a year. Although a fair number of the white families utilized gardens during most of the year, it can be readily seen that a considerable number of white families and the larger proportion of all the Negro families could very advantageously produce more of their supply of foodstuffs than is now the case.

The above observation is brought out more clearly in an examination of the extent to which families depend upon their gardens for a livelihood. Over sixty-one per cent of the white and Negro settlers reported that their gardens furnished less than thirty per cent of the family food supply. Eighteen per cent of the whites' gardens furnished less than fifteen per cent of this livelihood as compared with only one per cent of the Negroes in this category.

Of those families who depended to a large degree on their gardens, the greater relative numbers were among the Negroes. Only five per cent of the whites claimed to have got over sixty per cent of their living from gardens as compared with nineteen per cent of the Negro families. Generally speaking neither Negroes nor whites in the new ground area appear to be utilizing gardens to the full possible extent, although the Negroes appear to be depending on them to a greater extent than the whites.



## THE NEW GROUND SETTLER'S FARM

### Type and Size of Farm

The new ground farmers depend almost entirely on cotton for their cash crop. Having had little or no money with which to purchase the land, the farm must be paid for out of its own products. The one cash crop which might pay a large enough dividend with which such payments could be made is cotton. Cotton is therefore planted to the full extent of the AAA allotment.

The second largest crop is corn. The amount of corn planted is determined largely by the number of work and other livestock on the place. Having no extra money with which to purchase feed for the farm animals, it is almost a necessity for the farmers to produce enough corn and other feed crops to last through the year. To a less extent the size of the family determines the amount of extra corn to be planted. A very large proportion of the settlers use corn almost exclusively for their bread. Grist mills are at hand where the corn may be ground.

As to the production of other farm products the settlers must of necessity live at home so far as possible. Money is scarce and as little as possible is spent for food, though such staples as sugar, salt, soda, and coffee have to be purchased. Although most of the settlers already realize the necessity of a subsistence living they are strongly advised to carry on such a program by the Parish Agricultural and Home Demonstration Agents and helped particularly in



setting up of garden and canning programs. Likewise the Farm Security supervisors see to it that their clients follow live-at-home programs so far as possible. Some of the lumber companies in the area strongly advise this system and one of the large ones goes even farther by making available to its clients considerable literature on the subject and puts some pressure on them to see that the advice is followed.

In considering the size of the farms, it should be kept in mind that most of the incoming settlers have little if any money so that the cost of the land is necessarily high to them despite the actual price. Therefore, the farms are usually small. Of the 500 families studied, almost 400 of them (79 per cent) had farms which were 40 acres and under (table 18). About one-fifth were between 40 and 80 acres with very few larger. As would be expected because of the usually more favorable economic position, whites had slightly larger farms than Negroes. In fact, only one of the Negroes studied had a farm of over 80 acres.

In terms of averages the white's farm has 46 acres and the Negro's 33 acres, with 18 acres in cultivation for the former and 13 for the latter (table 19). This great difference between size of farm and acres in cultivation arises out of the condition of the land itself and the extreme difficulty with which it is cleared. Year by year the relative amount of land in cultivation should increase.

Regardless of the fact that a larger acreage of the present tracts may be put into cultivation it is the opinion of many of the agricultural technicians in the area that most of the farmers have holdings which are too small to operate successfully and suggest that



60 acres would come closer to being the minimum size on most of this land rather than the now somewhat conventional "forty." It appears that production is already going down on some of the farms because the acreages are too small for proper rotation. On such farms an increase in acreage appears to be an absolute necessity if successful operation is to be achieved.

### Terms of Purchasing Contracts

In a large measure, because most of the settlers are so poor when they come into the area, the terms of the contracts under which land is bought are of fundamental importance. Success or failure in the venture may depend upon the nature of the contract itself. If the time period given for complete payment for the land is too short, the interest rate too high, or the yearly payments too high, it is obvious that such terms in themselves constitute a limiting factor. It should be constantly kept in mind, especially in considering such contractual terms, that the settlers in the area have almost no outside source of income and that therefore the land itself must support the family, pay for the production costs of farming operations and the upkeep and expansion of the farm and equipment, and also pay the cost of the land the interest charges on the unpaid balance. It is only from this viewpoint that the contractual terms can be seen in their proper perspective.

The contracts found in the new ground area varied considerably according to the firm selling the land. In some few cases the terms of a single firm were found to differ somewhat, though this was fairly unusual and the variations were of minor importance. In general,



- the contracts of the settlers interviewed for this study conformed, with some minor variations, to eight major types as follows (table 20):
- No. 1 - 20% down payment, 5 years to pay, 6% interest
  - No. 2 - No down payment, first payment at end of third year, 10 years to pay, 6% interest
  - No. 3 - No down payment, eight years to pay, 10% at end of second year; 10% at end of third year; 15% at end of fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh year; 20% at end of eighth year, 6% interest
  - No. 4 - 10% down payment, 8 years to pay, 6% interest
  - No. 5 - \$100.00 down payment, \$50.00 per year until paid, 8 years to pay, 6% interest
  - No. 6 - No down payment, first payment of 10% at end of third year, then 12 years to pay, 6% interest
  - No. 7 - 10% down payment, 10 years to pay, 6% interest
  - No. 8 - \$50.00 at end of first and second year, \$100.00 third, fourth, fifth and sixth years; 6 years to pay, 6% interest.

By far the larger number of settlers had contract No. 2. Under this arrangement no down payment was required, the first payment falling due at the end of the third year. Although some of the settlers appeared to think these terms gave them three years use of the land rent free, this was not actually the case. Officials of the lumber companies seemed to feel that the erection of some sort of habitation, the clearing of some of the land, and the growing of the first two crops on the land constituted payment since the actual value of the land was increased considerably because of these improvements. This



"labor payment," if it may be so termed, was extended only over a two year period since the first cash payment became due at the end of the third crop year.

Ten years was given in which payment was to be completed. Thus, the total cost of the land is divided into ten equal payments, the first falling due at the end of the third year. However, the interest charges, based on the unpaid principal, begin when the contract is signed and the settler takes possession of the land. This means that when the first payment is made, the land payment plus three years' interest on the total price is due.

The other types of contracts vary somewhat from the type just described. Some of them call for a down payment of from ten to twenty per cent of the total price of the land. The time in which the payments are to be completed generally varies from five to ten years, though one lumber company divides the cost into four yearly payments. The interest charge is 6 per cent almost throughout the entire area.

Since this study was begun, several changes have been made in the contracts offered by the lumber companies. They appear to be the outcome of experience gained during their first few years of land sales. One of the larger companies no longer allows a two year payment-free period, but demands payment at the end of the first crop year. This change appears to have been made as the result of considerable dissatisfaction on the part of many of their clients over the unexpected size of the first payment. Expecting the payment to be a tenth of the total cost, plus a "reasonable" interest charge, the purchasers appeared not to appreciate the rapidity with which interest charges had accumulated.



The interest was charged not only on the land cost, but also on the price of the lumber for their houses and on the taxes with which they were assessed on taking possession of the land. The lumber was purchased on the same terms as the land. The interest charges on these various items, over a three year period usually amounts to considerably more than the actual land payment itself. Other firms in the area seem to be following the methods of this company so that at the present time few new contracts are granted which do not demand the first payment at the end of the first year.

The same reasons appear to be prompting the various firms to demand as large a down payment as the purchaser can afford. If the payments can be cut down in this way the interest charges will be less, and causes of misunderstanding between the firms and their clients resolved.

Settlers are able to keep up their payments only with great difficulty. It should be emphasized that little evidence exists which indicates that the lumber companies are concocting schemes through which large sections of land can be cleared, drained and developed at the expense of individuals and later sold in larger tracts at an increased price. On the contrary, the facts lead to an opposite conclusion. Most of the firms selling this land seem to have a sincere regard for the welfare of their clients, and to be anxious for as many of them as possible to succeed in gaining a clear title to the land for which they have contracted. This is not to say that the firms have altruistic motives either. The fact is,



they are in the business of selling land. Naturally they intend to make a profit from their operations. All of the charges which buyers of land have to pay--land and lumber cost, tax payments which are shifted when the contract is signed, recording fees, and interest charges on all of these items which are unpaid--are justifiable from a business viewpoint and are clearly legal in every respect,

It is not a question of motives, but an existing fact which the settlers are facing. Many of them have not been able to keep up their payments. The lumber companies are not foreclosing. As long as the settlers remain on the land and clear, drain and otherwise develop their holding, the companies do not actually stand to lose money and the value of the land is being steadily increased. At the same time, however, since individuals are behind in their payments they are in a position in which their land could be taken over by the companies, so that regardless of their continued tenure, they cannot be said to be secure on the land.

#### Down Payments

Of 500 settlers interviewed, nine out of ten made no down payment on their land, and those who did were all former tenants (table 21). Several of the settlers made payments from the bonus they had received as veterans.

In the light of recent changes which have led to a demand for a down payment, the source of the money for such a payment will become increasingly important. If this money is borrowed, as it must be in many cases, the interest rate on this loan will probably offset any



advantages obtained by the settler in making the down payment. Then, since it is already difficult for many of the settlers to obtain credit, the situation will be even more difficult for them, and some will probably be unable to obtain land at all.

### Production Credit and Interest Rates

Closely associated with the source of purchasing credit, and perhaps even more important in the business of farming, is the question of production credit. The consideration of credit problems is particularly pertinent in a discussion of new ground farms. Exceedingly few of the settlers have saved enough to carry them through the crop year, hence credit from some source becomes an absolute necessity. The loan which they are able to make, and particularly the interest on such a loan, is an item which looms large in any consideration of the financial aspect of new ground settlement.

The traditional pattern of crop financing in the South is evident here. Merchants finance most of the farms in the area just as they have been doing throughout the South ever since the Civil War (table 22). But acceptable collateral has become more important. Among other things the fact that only 4 per cent of the settlers borrowed money from banks is a definite indication of a lack of such assets as would be considered acceptable collateral for bank credit. No Negroes reported loans from banks. Six out of ten of all white settlers and 8 out of 10 of all Negroes got credit from merchants.

The interest rate charged for this credit was relatively high, most of the settlers being charged 10 per cent or more, and a signi-



ificantly large number being charged 20 per cent or more. Negroes were charged a higher rate than whites. The conventional meaning of the term "rate of interest," when applied to merchant credit, follows a common practice in the region for the merchant to collect the annual rate of interest on the entire amount loaned, regardless of whether or not the loan period is less than a year. In other words, the rate is applied to the amount and figured on a yearly basis whether the time period is two weeks or six months or a year. Loans are universally due and payable at the end of the crop year.

Several factors are to be considered in accounting for the high interest rate for merchant credit. In the first place the farmer cannot obtain credit elsewhere, so the demand is great enough to make such a high interest rate acceptable to him. In the second place, the settler has few assets which would be normally acceptable as collateral. This fact, added to the uncertainties of the weather through the crop year and the price which will be received for the crop, makes for a considerable risk to any agency granting the farmer credit. Hence, from the merchant's viewpoint, the rate of interest should be commensurate with the amount of risk he takes in making the loan. From the viewpoint of the farmer, however, it should be pointed out that such high interest rates are excessive and constitute a severe burden to an already insecure financial position.

The various governmental agencies furnished credit to 20 per cent of the white settlers and to 15 per cent of the Negroes. Of these agencies, the Farm Security Administration furnished over 14



per cent of the whites and 11 per cent of the Negroes. The Farm Credit Administration is the only other governmental agency which loaned money to the settlers interviewed. The interest rates charged by these agencies are uniformly reasonable and substantially lower than those charged by any other credit agency in the area. The relations between these agencies and their clients are generally satisfactory and most of the individuals interviewed expressed themselves as preferring to borrow from them rather than from private sources. The cause for the small number who use this type of credit is probably to be found in the qualifications set up by these agencies rather than the actual preference on the part of the individual farmers.

Of all the settlers interviewed, 13 per cent of the whites and 6 per cent of the Negroes received no production loans. These figures are probably more of an indication of an inability to borrow from any source on any terms than of an absence of need for credit. As was mentioned above, there are few settlers in the area who have been able to accumulate reserves sufficient to carry themselves without aid from outside sources.

Although it is upon the crop production and management of the farm that final success or failure is to be judged, it is not within the province of this study to consider in any great detail the production record of the new ground farms. Such a study will be left to the students of farm management. However, some records of a general nature were taken and numerical averages computed from them. Although the limitations of the simple average is clearly recognized, the only



purpose here is to show in general the progress of the settlers toward the successful completion of their ventures.

It will be noted that the "average" settler obtained slightly over \$250 in cash from all sources (table 23). Of course, a few of the settlers made more than this, but it is clear that it would be virtually impossible for an individual to make less and be able to make his payments. Land and lumber payments, recording and other fees, taxes, production loans and interest on all of these payments would amount to almost as much as the average settler made, even when the acreage purchased is small and with the payments at a minimum.

In spite of the need for outside earnings, only 22 persons reported outside jobs of any sort. However, one of the larger lumber companies is now trying to give its clients work during the winter so the settlers can earn more than their farms supply. Only a small proportion of the settlers reported sale of livestock or of livestock products. It should be expected, however, that as more land is cleared on individual farms, more of the settlers will begin to supplement their incomes by these methods. That part of the living supplied by home grown products is discussed in the previous chapter.



## FACTORS AFFECTING CONDITIONS ON NEW GROUND FARMS

The factors which have a definite bearing upon the conditions in the new ground area and which must be met by the individuals in order that their enterprises be successful, fall into four broad categories: physical, financial, administrative, and cultural. A brief discussion of each follows.

### Physical Factors

Of the definitely physical factors which affect the new ground farmers, there are primarily three aspects: drainage, land clearance, and soil productivity. Although there are local differences in soil productivity throughout the area, it may be said in general that the soil is fertile enough as not to constitute a problem in itself.<sup>11/</sup> All of the land is within the Delta, and, despite the existence of a ridge running through three of the parishes, it may be considered lowland, especially in relation to the nearby hill parishes.

In parts of the area, however, much of the soil is of a particularly heavy type and is exceedingly difficult to cultivate. Not only does this entail a tremendous amount of physical labor, but it also necessitates heavier farm equipment. There is reason to believe, from interviews with lumber company agents and agricultural experts,

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<sup>11/</sup> The statement of one of the farmers that "This land will grow anything but freedom" appears to be an expansion of this feeling--that the land is fertile enough and that other factors limit the opportunity to make a success of the venture.



that this soil condition was the limiting factor which brought about a much higher percentage of Negroes in these sections than elsewhere. A prevalent opinion was that the Negroes paid higher prices for the land than the whites, and that white farmers were not willing to settle on such land when land with lighter soils could be obtained elsewhere.

Of primary importance in the area are the problems associated with the drainage of the land.<sup>12/</sup> Naturally, the seriousness of the problem varies from parish to parish and from farm to farm within parishes. In general, land along established roads and along the larger bayous is relatively high and the actual problem of drainage is not great except in times of actual overflow. The remainder of the land presents more serious problems. Many of the farms are low, the water drains off very slowly, and in some cases drains from one farm on to another. In such cases the only solution appears to be through the cooperation of all the settlers in a particular community. Most of the farmers whose land was in need of drainage expressed their need and their willingness to pay the necessary tax for such services. As it is the settlers are compelled to ditch their own land as best they can. This is virtually impossible since there are few large outlets which can carry off the excess rains.

Closely associated with drainage is the lack of all-weather roads throughout the area. There are some gravelled highways, but almost

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<sup>12/</sup> At land use planning meetings in Madison Parish, the lack of proper drainage was emphasized as being probably the most serious agricultural problem facing the parish as a whole. This was considered particularly pertinent to the new ground areas.



no lateral gravelled roads extending into the new ground settlements. Such roads as do exist vary from fairly recently graded roads to mere paths worn by the passage of wagons and cars going in and out of the woods. This situation has two implications, both of which are of major importance. In the first place, a well graded and ditched road affords a drainage outlet for a considerable area of land on both sides of the road. In the second place transportation facilities are badly needed. The condition of the roads constitutes a serious problem during the rainy seasons. Cars cannot get in and out of the settlements and the families are virtually isolated during extended periods of time. School children are compelled to walk out to the nearest highways in order to catch the school bus--as much as four miles in some instances. The condition of the roads also makes it difficult to attend neighborhood and community activities. The people cannot leave their farms after the rains set in and when the weather will allow it, there is so much work to be done about the place that little time and energy is left for activities other than the necessary farm work.

Another physical factor of major importance in the cutover sections is that of land clearing. The timber was cut from the land some time ago and it has now grown up in dense underbrush and second-growth hardwood. The trees are of such size that they have to be felled with an ax, yet are too small to be of commercial value. The undergrowth must be cleared away with a brush-ax and burned. All of this requires a great deal of labor. After the land is cleared, the stumps must either be pulled, dynamited, or burned out. They are



usually burned out because of the greater expense involved in the other two methods. A planter who lives near one of these communities advocates the use of "tree dope" which kills the tree and rots out the stump and roots within two or three years. This method, however, involves not only an expense, but also a period of time during which the solution can do its work. Among the settlers interviewed, a considerable number was found who used this method. These farmers had to clear part of the land by hand the first two years and apply the "dope" to the trees they wish to remove at a later period. At best, however, the clearing of the land is a very difficult job, and there is no easy method.

Estimates concerning the expense of clearing this land vary considerably. Most of the agricultural experts in the area, however, were fairly well agreed that the cost of clearing and draining the land at least amounts to the difference in the price of this land and land now in production. On the other hand, the settler at least has a job and is getting something for his work while he is clearing.

### Financial Factors

Financial factors are of fundamental importance in the new land farmers situation. The actual price of the land is the first monetary charge with which the settler has to deal. The price of land varies greatly from parish to parish and from seller to seller. Within a parish it varies according to seller, location, or other factors. Prices range from \$5.00 to \$100.00 per acre within the same parish. Throughout the entire area the following generalizations may be



tentatively drawn: (1) Within a particular district when land is sold by a single firm or individual, variations in the price of land appear to be determined more by accessibility and the bargaining power of individuals than by differences in soil type or productivity. (2) Land sold prior to about 1934 was disposed at a much lower price than after the lumber companies began their landselling programs.<sup>13/</sup> (3) Considering variations mentioned above, the lower lying land having rather poor natural drainage and dense plant growth sells for about \$15.00 to \$25.00 per acre. More favorably situated land is priced at about \$40.00 an acre, while some prices are even higher.

Naturally, it would be extremely difficult to generalize upon the actual value of land as compared with the price charged for it. In some cases the prices appear reasonable, in others extortionate. In terms of present farm conditions there is considerable doubt as to whether any new ground land is worth more than \$50.00 per acre. When the costs of putting the land into production are added to this figure, the total costs are probably in excess of the value of the developed land in the area. In certain sections of the area, land prices of \$40.00 appear high. Persons well qualified to judge have

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<sup>13/</sup> Land purchased some time ago by one of the settlers was bought for cash at \$5.00 an acre. Adjoining land is now being paid for by the same individual at \$40.00 per acre.



made the statement that settlers could not ordinarily pay over \$25.00 per acre for the land and make a success of the enterprise--that the land could not furnish the family with a living, supply the production costs, and pay for itself at the same time at a price in excess of this figure.

Inextricably connected with the price of land is the contract through which the land is actually purchased. The terms of purchase contracts as they affect certain individuals have already been discussed. A summation will be given here to show the effect of the contractual terms on the actual price of the land.

Although contracts differ greatly, they may be said to vary in degree somewhat about the following terms. The total price of the land is divided into ten equal payments and interest is charged upon the total amount of the unpaid principal from the time that the contract is signed. The time which the first payment is due varies from one to three crop years. In the case of the latter term the settler would have the use of the land free from all but interest charges for two years. Thus, at the end of the third year one year's principal would be due as well as three years' interest charges. In a majority of cases lumber is purchased from the lumber company which sells the land. The price of the lumber is added to the land price as is the interest on the lumber. Other charges which are made include taxes and interest on taxes, <sup>14/</sup> and a fee plus interest for the recording of the deed.

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<sup>14/</sup> Taxes are assessed to the lumber company until the land is deeded over to the purchaser. Until then, the company pays the taxes and charges the amount as well as the interest on the tax against the account of the purchaser.



Thus it will be seen that the actual price of the land amounts to a considerable sum even if the per-acre price is fairly small.<sup>15/</sup> Several of the agricultural experts within the area expressed the opinion that few of the purchasers fully realize the size of the amount which falls due at the time of their first payment.

Another important financial factor is the need of the settlers for credit. Almost none of them have accumulated a reserve, and it is necessary that they have some money to carry on their farming activities. Seed, fertilizer, and probably some equipment must be purchased, as well as supplies to meet family needs. It has been shown above where the settlers get their credit. It will be recalled also that the two most striking features of the credit arrangements have been the uncertainty of a dependable source of credit and the almost universal high rate of interest which is charged for credit throughout the area. The Federal credit agencies constitute a notable exception to this rule. When it is possible for the settlers to borrow money from any of the governmental agencies, the interest charges are reasonable and the individual borrowers are almost

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<sup>15/</sup> Thus, on a 40 acre tract purchased at \$15 per acre, the total amount due would be \$104.00 (including taxes) if the payment were made at the end of the first year. If it were made at the end of the third year it would amount to \$194.00. In both cases the charge would also include 1/10 the value of the lumber purchased plus the interest on the lumber price.



universally satisfied with the arrangements. However, it has not been possible for all of the farmers to obtain credit from these agencies regardless of the definite advantages and the extreme need for such arrangements to be made.

In summation, the price of the land, which is oftentimes too highly valued, the cumulative aspect of high interest rates upon land prices and credit, as well as the uncertainty of credit, have all combined to erect a series of financial obstructions that are proving extremely difficult to overcome.

#### Administrative Factors

Several factors operate within the cutover sections over which the settlers themselves have little or no control but which greatly influence conditions within the area. Among these factors are the AAA program, the activities of the Farm Security Administration, the WPA and other welfare agencies, and the various governmental credit agencies.

Since cotton is the major cash crop in the Delta region as a whole, and since the settlers must obtain a cash income to pay for their farms, it will be at once apparent that the AAA program and its effects on the cotton production of individual farms is of fundamental importance. In discussions with Parish Agricultural Agents and Parish AAA Assistant Supervisors it appeared that almost universal agreement was reached on the opinion that, as a whole, new ground settlers are allowed to enter into cotton production on an acreage which is insufficient to meet their monetary needs. In other words it is almost



impossible for the individual to get a cotton acreage allotment large enough to pay (in benefit payments and cotton sale) for the land, the production costs and necessary family expenditures. The manner in which such a situation arises appears to be inherent in the nature of the new ground settlement. An individual contracts for land in the late fall or winter, often around the first of January, the traditional "moving day" in the cotton South. By planting time he has erected some sort of habitation and cleared from three to five acres. The larger part of this is put in cotton, most of the remainder is planted in corn for livestock feed. If three acres are planted in cotton he has done fairly well. Before the cotton is sold an allotment must be secured from the AAA office. After the allotment is set, the cotton may be sold without penalty. The next year when the settler has had time to clear more land, no larger cotton acreage may be planted, for the law states that in any year no greater acreage may be planted in cotton than the greatest acreage planted during the previous five years. Thus as long as the settler remains within the AAA program he cannot plant more cotton than he did the first year. The only way in which this acreage can be increased is for the farmer to remain out of the program for a year, after considerable land has been cleared, and for a much larger acreage to be put in cotton during this year. Such procedure, however, entails definite sacrifices, sacrifices which many of the individuals cannot afford to make. In the first place, no benefit payments would be received. In the second place, a penalty tax of 3¢ per pound must be paid on all cotton produced in this manner.



When land payments must be paid and cotton prices are such as they have been in recent years, the reasons for continued cooperation can readily be seen.

The individuals administering the program are not unaware of these conditions. They realize fully that the farmers must have a larger acreage allotment if they are to pay for their land, and that they, as administrators, have no other course to follow than to administer the law as it is written. Although these officials cannot actually advise the settlers to refuse to cooperate with the AAA for a year, lumber company officials and others do give them this advice. Some of the lumber companies are attempting to aid settlers in increasing their acreage allotment. One such company suspends payment for the land during the year the individual fails to comply with AAA regulations, though he must take the loss of benefit payment and pay the penalty tax himself. At best, however, it is difficult for the settler to stay out of the program because of the economic penalties connected with such a procedure, yet even more difficult to comply and depend on the cash realized from a too-small acreage.

Another governmental agency which operates within the new ground area is the Farm Security Administration. There are several ways in which this agency materially aids its clients. It furnishes them with needed production credit at a very reasonable interest rate. It gives the farmers supervision in the physical and financial management of the farm, and the housekeeper supervision in home management. Both of the supervisory functions are badly needed by many of the families. A small amount of money is also furnished some of the families for



current living expenses and necessary equipment. Although the administration has instituted a tenant purchase program in which land is bought for tenants and the money repaid over an extended period of time at a low interest rate,<sup>16/</sup> none of the settlers in this area appear to have been aided in this manner.

By far the larger proportion of new ground farmers are not being aided by the Farm Security Administration. In a substantial number of cases they have been turned down upon application. One of the major factors in this situation has been the failure of individual settlers to obtain a cotton allotment of such size as to enable them to repay their loan. Thus the individual is caught between two governmental agencies. He needs credit because of the lack of a large enough cash crop. The Farm Security Administration will not advance him this credit because he does not have a large enough cash crop to insure the payment of the loan, yet he cannot increase the size of the crop because of AAA regulations. The supervisors of both of these agencies are aware of this dilemma and are in complete sympathy with the settlers yet they are quite as helpless as the settler himself.

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<sup>16/</sup> In some cases the individual purchases the land and the administration refinances the indebtedness by paying the debt and allowing the individual to pay it out over a long time at a low interest rate. It would seem that this variation would necessarily be followed in case this aspect of the program were instituted in the new ground area.



One other aspect of the AAA administration in the area should be considered. Under the regulations of this agency, new cotton acreage allotments must be taken from the allotment made to the parish as a whole. The resulting condition is this: in 1938, 36 per cent of the crop land in a sample parish of this area was put into cotton production; in 1939 the allotment dropped to 33 per cent, and this year it is 30 per cent. Therefore, when new land is brought into cultivation, the older settlers in the parish suffer a decrease in the amount of cotton they can grow, and many of them, especially the small farmers, cannot plant less cotton than they now are and keep their farms much longer. This condition is setting a very realistic basis for antagonistic feeling between the older settlers and the new ground people. Many of the individuals among the old settlers sympathize completely with the new settlers. They realize the difficulties with which they are faced and appreciate the courage and the fortitude and labor with which the undertaking must be faced. Despite the sympathetic attitude, however, the fact remains that the new ground farmers are making substantial inroads upon the allotments already granted to the more established individuals. A feeling of personal injury will almost inevitably replace the present attitude if the present trends continue and if no administrative action is taken to alleviate this situation.

In some of the parishes studied, WPA work projects have been utilized in the new ground sections to complete needed works and to give the people an opportunity to earn some money to add to their



incomes. In some instances such projects have been promised the people in return for political support or to quiet their demands. Where actually undertaken these projects have resulted in valuable contributions to communities in the form of improved roads, drainage ditches and school houses as well as supplying a needed supplementary income to the people. Few additional generalizations can be made except that there is a definite need for such public improvements throughout the entire area and also a need for the additional income which the work would furnish to the people. In several interviews the opinion was expressed that the settlers would, at the next election, "vote just as opposite to the way we voted last time as it is possible to do," because of the failure of local politicians to fulfill election promises in which they "guaranteed" to furnish such projects to communities.

The Farm Security Administration has already been mentioned in connection with its supervisory function. Although it is not a credit agency, as such, it has been seen that it does act in this capacity, even though indirectly. Governmental credit agencies, as such, operating within the area are the government subsidized Federal Land Bank and Production Credit Association, and the "Seed Loan" division of the Farm Credit Administration. The Federal Land Bank and the Production Credit Association rarely if ever serve new ground farmers because of the amount of collateral they demand of borrowers before they can qualify for a loan. A few of the settlers got "seed loans" but as few of the offices are located in the Delta as yet, such loans are rare.



### Cultural Factors

There are forces, arising out of the past environment of the settlers, which though indirect in their effects, have a tremendous influence upon the work and lives of the new ground farmers. Such a force is the background of tenancy which many of the present settlers have experienced. Although it is not within the province of this study to discuss the characteristics and effects of tenancy, a few generalizations can be reached in their application to the group of people with which the study is concerned.

It will be recalled that all of the settlers with which the present study deals formerly occupied some category within the system of tenancy--cropper, share tenant, or cash renter. That tenants, and particularly tenants who work on plantations, often receive more or less supervision from their landlords has been a recognized fact in the South for a long time. Where supervision has been thorough, little opportunity has arisen for the tenant to learn to manage his own farm. In fact it may be said that to the extent that the tenant receives supervision, to that extent he fails to operate the farm himself. It is only through actually operating a farm that an individual can learn the complete management of the farm. Naturally this is less true of hill farmers than with Delta farmers. The hill farm is small and even with supervision an individual would become familiar with most of the managerial functions connected with farm operation.

Such a situation has far-reaching implications. The new ground area is no place for individuals who do not know how to farm. Knowing how to plow is not enough, nor will mere willingness to face conditions



suffice. A knowledge of all of the functions of farm operation and management is necessary as well as knowledge of clearing and drainage of land. It is the opinion of the agricultural technicians in the area that the settlers as a whole do not possess these highly important qualifications.

One of the functions of county agents is to aid farmers in solving problems which arise in farm operations. The agents in the parishes in which the new ground farms are located appear willing to help the settlers in any way in which they can, but their other duties have kept them from doing very intensive work in this regard. In one parish the agent offered his services but was told by the people that they wished to "get started" before he came out. They appeared to feel that the agent's services would mean more to them if this procedure were followed.

Those settlers who are clients of the Farm Security Administration receive some supervision in planning their work and in actual farm operation. Their finances are also supervised and efforts are made to insure that only necessary expenditures are made and that value is received for all money spent. Another important function of this agency is to see to it that a live-at-home program is planned and followed as closely as possible. A budget for the home is set up, a garden is planned and canning is supervised carefully. Thus the finances of the family are placed on a sound basis and a greater opportunity to pay for the farm is realized. Many of the agricultural technicians appear to feel that the clients of this agency have more of an opportunity to pay for their farms than do those individuals who, for one reason or another, are not



connected with the Administration. They give as the major factor the supervision they receive from the experts associated with the agency, though the credit which the settlers receive is of importance also. In discussing this function an assistant supervisor for the Administration made the following observations: He recognized the need of the farmers as regards supervision, but appeared to think that the technicians should not completely supervise actual farm operations to a great extent but that the settlers should be made to think for themselves more than most of them appear willing to do. In this way, he believes, they can be taught to take up the managerial functions and so become independent farmers. He said that it was necessary for the Farm Security people to "sell" themselves to the settlers so that they would accept their decisions and place trust in their directional activities, but that he saw danger in "selling" themselves too well, to the extent that the farmers would come to depend upon their advisors to the exclusion of assuming the managerial functions themselves.



## SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

New ground farming in the Mississippi River Delta represents one of several means by which families who have been unsuccessful as tenants or croppers on other farms are attempting to make a new adjustment. Most of these people are relatively young, have had no experience other than farming and have migrated only a short distance. The bulk of them are white and there are exceedingly few broken homes. They have come to the new ground farms from larger farms on which they were for the most part share croppers. A number of them had been laborers at a previous period in their careers but none reported the status of laborer immediately prior to settling on the new ground. The presumption here is that agricultural wage laborers, either part-or full time, would hardly attempt such a difficult task as clearing and breaking new ground so long as some support was available from their old jobs. The new ground settlers have made a clean break with their previous agricultural connection. For most of them there was no alternative. They knew of no where else to turn. Few had any managerial experience; few had cash for a down payment on the land, not to mention the means for living. With mounting interest and the general uncertainties of their agricultural situation their task is indeed difficult. They are, however, a relatively young group and probably of more than average initiative else they would hardly try such a hard task. In view of their attempt to help themselves, as contrasted with such a large proportion of the disadvantaged who rely on others, it would seem that every aid and encouragement which may be extended to them would be well placed. Although the present study does not deal with community and cooperative enterprises, it appears that this should be a major line of effort among these small farmers in order that some of the benefits of large scale and mechanized agriculture may accrue to them.



## APPENDIX

### Condensed Titles of Tables Included in Appendix

#### Table No.

1. Number of Households Enumerated
2. Number of Farms Entering Cotton Production
3. Last Farm Location
4. Place of Birth
5. Place of Birth of Parents
6. Number of Years Spent on Last Farm
7. Number of Years Usually Spent on One Plantation
8. Greatest Number of Years Spent on Any Plantation
9. Year in Which Left Last Plantation
10. Former Tenure Status
11. Tenure Status of Fathers
12. Tenure Status of Fathers of Croppers
13. Increase in Owner-Operated Farms
14. Fertility Ratio
15. Size of Households
16. School Grades Completed
17. Size of Farm
18. Acreage in Cultivation
19. Types of Purchasing Contracts
20. Source of Money for Down Payments
21. Agencies and Interest Rates Charged
22. Average Cash Income
23. Number of Rooms in Houses
24. Number of Houses Having Glassed Windows
25. Number of Houses Having Screened Windows
26. Household Equipment and Conveniences



Table 1.- Number of households enumerated in new ground farmer study, by parish and race

Parish	Total		White		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	500	100.0	400	100.0	100	100.0
Tensas	27	5.4	20	5.0	7	7.0
East Carroll	48	9.6	16	4.0	32	32.0
West Carroll	140	28.0	140	35.0	-	-
Madison	90	18.0	63	15.8	27	27.0
Richland	167	33.4	156	39.0	11	11.0
Concordia	28	5.6	5	1.2	23	23.0

Table 2.- Number of farms entering cotton production in North Louisiana Delta parishes, 1936-40

Parish	Total	1936 <sup>1/</sup>	1937 <sup>2/</sup>	1938 <sup>2/</sup>	1939 <sup>2/</sup>	1940 <sup>2/</sup>
Total	3,693	527	885	882	896	503
Catahoula	341	56	91	84	81	29
Concordia	139	34	38	28	22	17
East Carroll	506	71	172	124	93	46
Franklin	436	63	102	88	119	64
Madison	361	32	91	60	72	106
Richland	606	88	131	131	159	97
Tensas	312	30	101	93	45	43
West Carroll	992	153	159	274	305	101

Source: records of State Office, Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The adequacy of this source for the purposes at hand is limited by the fact that not all new farms entering production are new ground farms. Likewise not all new ground farms are included in the AAA program. In addition, except for the years 1937 and 1939, the data are incomplete. But despite these limitations, the data show that a considerable movement into the Delta is underway.

1/ Farms planted in cotton for first time since 1927.

2/ Farms planted in cotton 1940, having been out of cotton production for the previous three years. These data are as of February 1, 1940.



Table 3.- Last farm location of 500 new ground farmers, by race

Location	Total Number	White Number	Negro Number
Total	500	400	100
<u>Louisiana</u>			
Mississippi Delta	333	240	93
Red River Valley	19	17	2
Upland Hills	85	83	2
Other	1	1	0
<u>Mississippi</u>			
Miss.-Yazoo Delta	15	12	3
Other	29	29	0
<u>Arkansas</u>	15	15	0
<u>Texas</u>	3	3	0

Table 4.- Place of birth of 500 new ground farmers, by race

Location	Total Number	White Number	Negro Number
Total	500	400	100
<u>Louisiana</u>			
Mississippi Delta	203	134	69
Red River Valley	33	25	8
Upland Hills	132	130	2
Other	7	6	1
<u>Mississippi</u>			
Miss.-Yazoo Delta	22	17	5
Other	62	52	10
<u>Alabama</u>	9	7	2
<u>Arkansas</u>	23	20	3
<u>Illinois</u>	2	2	0
<u>Kentucky</u>	1	1	0
<u>North Carolina</u>	1	1	0
<u>Texas</u>	5	5	0



Table 5.- Place of birth of parents of new ground farmers,  
by sex and race

Location	Total		White		Negro	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total	500	500	400	400	100	100
<u>Louisiana</u>						
Mississippi Delta	172	166	108	105	64	61
Red River Valley	40	40	32	32	8	8
Upland Hills	129	122	126	118	3	4
Other	6	3	5	2	1	1
Nonascertainable	8	14	6	9	2	5
<u>Mississippi</u>						
Miss.-Yazoo Delta	23	18	18	14	5	4
Other	62	64	52	54	10	10
Nonascertainable	12	20	10	18	2	2
<u>Other States</u>						
Arkansas	24	27	21	24	3	3
Alabama	14	13	12	11	2	2
Texas	5	9	5	9	-	-
Virginia	1	0	1	0	-	-
Kentucky	0	1	0	1	-	-
Illinois	2	2	2	2	-	-
North Carolina	1	1	1	1	-	-
South Carolina	1	0	1	0	-	-



Table 6.- Number of years 500 new ground farmers spent on last farm, by race

Number of years on last farm	Total		White		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	500	100.0	400	100.0	100	100.0
Average years	3.6		3.5		4.1	
One	45	9.0	30	7.5	15	15.0
Two	116	23.2	95	23.8	21	21.0
Three	134	26.8	118	29.5	16	16.0
Four	86	17.2	70	17.5	16	16.0
Five	43	8.6	35	8.8	8	8.0
Six	23	4.6	17	4.2	6	6.0
Seven	20	4.0	17	4.2	3	3.0
Eight	9	1.8	6	1.5	3	3.0
Nine or more	24	4.8	12	3.0	12	12.0

Table 7.- Number of years which new ground farmers usually spent on one plantation, by race

Number of years on one plantation	Total		White		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	145	100.0	121	100.0	24	100.0
Average years	3.6		3.5		4.0	
One	8	5.5	2	1.7	6	25.0
Two	43	29.7	37	30.6	6	25.0
Three	47	32.4	43	35.5	4	16.7
Four	15	10.3	13	10.7	2	8.3
Five	16	11.0	16	13.2	-	-
Six	2	1.4	2	1.7	-	-
Seven	1	0.7	1	-	1	4.2
Eight	4	2.8	4	3.3	-	-
Nine or more	9	6.2	4	3.3	5	20.8



Table 3.- Greatest number of years which new ground farmed, first  
on any plantation, by race

Number of years on any plantation	Total		White		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	500	100.0	400	100.0	100	100.0
Average years	4.5		4.3		5.1	
One	10	2.0	8	2.0	2	2.0
Two	45	9.0	36	9.0	9	9.0
Three	131	26.2	116	29.0	15	15.0
Four	114	22.8	94	23.5	20	20.0
Five	83	16.6	64	16.0	19	19.0
Six	48	9.6	38	9.5	10	10.0
Seven	30	6.0	24	6.0	6	6.0
Eight	12	2.4	7	1.8	5	5.0
Nine or more	27	5.4	13	3.2	14	14.0



Table 1. - Year in which Negroes left last plantation,  
by size of plantation and by race

Date of separation and size of plantation	Total Number	White Number	Negro Number
Total - all years	429	364	65
<u>Size of plantation:</u>			
Less than 200 acres	144	139	5
200-499 acres	154	121	33
500-999 acres	56	39	17
1000 acres and over	75	65	10
<u>Left plantation 1937-38</u>	126	92	34
<u>Size of plantation:</u>			
Less than 200 acres	42	39	3
200-499 acres	33	19	14
500-999 acres	24	13	11
1000 acres and over	27	21	6
<u>Left plantation 1936</u>	115	101	14
<u>Size of plantation:</u>			
Less than 200 acres	34	33	1
200-499 acres	49	40	9
500-999 acres	14	13	1
1000 acres and over	18	15	3
<u>Left plantation 1935</u>	83	72	11
<u>Size of plantation:</u>			
Less than 200 acres	29	28	1
200-499 acres	32	25	7
500-999 acres	8	6	2
1000 acres and over	14	13	1
<u>Left plantation 1934</u>	52	51	1
<u>Size of plantation:</u>			
Less than 200 acres	19	19	-
200-499 acres	26	26	-
500-999 acres	4	3	1
1000 acres and over	3	3	-
<u>Left plantation 1933-30</u>	53	48	5
<u>Size of plantation:</u>			
Less than 200 acres	20	20	-
200-499 acres	14	11	3
500-999 acres	6	4	2
1000 acres and over	13	13	-



Table 10.- Former tenure status of 500 new ground farmers, by race

Tenure status	Total		White		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	500	100.0	400	100.0	100	100.0
Croppers	326	65.2	253	63.3	73	73.0
Share tenants	145	29.0	121	30.2	24	24.0
Cash renters	29	5.8	26	6.5	3	3.0

Table 11.- Tenure status of fathers of 500 new ground farmers, by race

Tenure status	Total		White		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	500	100.0	400	100.0	100	100.0
Cash renter	45	9.0	43	10.7	2	2.0
Standing renter	5	1.0	5	1.2	-	-
Cropper	231	46.2	143	35.8	88	88.0
Share tenant	37	7.4	32	8.0	5	5.0
Owner	179	35.8	175	43.8	4	4.0
Does not apply	3	0.6	2	0.5	1	1.0



Table 12.- Tenure status of fathers of 326 former croppers, by race

Tenure status	Total		White		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	326	100.0	253	100.0	73	100.0
Cash renter	21	6.4	21	8.3	-	-
Standing renter	4	1.2	4	1.6	-	-
Cropper	163	50.0	97	38.3	66	90.4
Share tenant	23	7.1	20	7.9	3	4.1
Owner	112	34.4	109	43.1	3	4.1
Irrelevant	3	0.9	2	0.8	1	1.4

Table 13.- Percent increase in owner-operated farms in North Louisiana Delta, by parish, by race, 1925-35\*

Parish	Total increase		White increase		Negro increase	
	1925	1930	1925	1930	1925	1930
	to	to	to	to	to	to
	1930	1935	1930	1935	1930	1935
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
Total	17.6	31.7	13.5	37.2	38.3	8.8
Catahoula	1.1	19.7	- 2.4	25.2	42.9	-25.0
Concordia	10.9	65.8	0.0	76.0	125.0	18.5
East Carroll	21.6	32.8	-19.0	112.5	65.9	- 9.0
Franklin	6.3	14.2	4.8	15.4	17.0	6.5
Madison	11.8	45.2	22.7	45.7	-14.8	43.5
Richland	13.6	42.1	13.9	50.1	12.4	8.3
Tensas	52.9	39.1	18.1	31.6	205.3	51.7
West Carroll	55.8	41.9	59.4	46.5	36.7	13.4

\* Source: Publications of Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce. Although not all of these farms are new ground farms, it seems certain that a considerable proportion of the increase resulted from clearing of cutover land.



Table 14.- Fertility ratio of 500 new ground families and selected north Louisiana parishes by race, 1930

Age group	Total		White		Negro	
	New	Delta	New	Delta	New	Delta
	ground	Delta	ground	Delta	ground	Delta
Fertility ratio	516.1	514.7	501.4	717.3	574.7	445.9
Number of children						
Under 5 years	224	5,977	174	2,096	50	3,859
Number of females						
20-44 years	434	11,612	347	2,922	87	8,653

Table 15.- Size of households of 500 new ground farmers, by race

Number in households	Total households		White households		Negro households	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	500	100.0	400	100.0	100	100.0
One	0	0	0	0	0	0
Two	82	16.4	55	13.8	27	27.0
Three	93	18.6	75	18.8	18	18.0
Four	110	22.0	84	21.0	26	26.0
Five	103	20.6	87	21.8	16	16.0
Six	54	10.8	47	11.8	7	7.0
Seven	31	6.2	29	7.2	2	2.0
Eight	13	2.6	10	2.5	3	3.0
Nine	10	2.0	9	2.2	1	1.0
Ten	2	0.4	2	0.5	-	-
Eleven	1	0.2	1	0.2	-	-
Twelve	1	0.2	1	0.2	-	-



Table 16.- School grades completed by heads and by wives of new ground households by race, 1939

Grade completed	Total		White		Negro	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	number	number	number	number	number	number
Total	494	485	398	388	96	97
None	86	75	33	18	53	57
First	17	10	5	0	12	10
Second	74	44	60	29	14	15
Third	61	62	54	56	7	6
Fourth	81	65	74	60	7	5
Fifth	47	76	47	73	0	3
Sixth	48	47	48	47	0	0
Seventh	52	42	49	42	3	0
Eighth	11	29	11	29	0	0
Attended High School	26	56	26	55	0	1
Finished High School	2	8	2	8	0	0
Attended College	0	0	0	0	0	0



Table 17.- Size of farm of 500 new ground farmers by parish and by race

Size of farm and parish of residence	Total Number	White Number	Negro Number
Total	500	400	100
(1) <u>Tensas</u>			
Less than 41 acres	21	15	6
41-80 acres	5	4	1
81 acres and more	1	1	-
(2) <u>East Carroll</u>			
Less than 41 acres	45	15	30
41-80 acres	2	1	1
81 acres and more	1	-	1
(3) <u>West Carroll</u>			
Less than 41 acres	121	121	-
41-80 acres	19	19	-
81 acres and more	-	-	-
(4) <u>Madison</u>			
Less than 41 acres	67	43	24
41-80 acres	19	16	3
81 acres and more	4	4	-
(5) <u>Richland</u>			
Less than 41 acres	114	104	10
41-80 acres	48	47	1
81 acres and more	5	5	-
(6) <u>Concordia</u>			
Less than 41 acres	28	5	23
41-80 acres	-	-	-
81 acres and more	-	-	-



Table 18.- Size of farm and 1939 acreage in cultivation of new ground farmers by former tenure status

Former tenure status:	Farms	Average acres			Average size		
	: reporting:	in crops			of farm		
	: Number	: Total	: White	: Negro	: Total	: White	: Negro
		: operated	: operated	: operated	: acres	: acres	: acres
Total	: 429	17.5	18.2	13.0	44.3	46.2	33.3
Cropper	: 274	16.6	17.3	13.1	43.5	45.0	35.8
Share tenant	: 128	18.2	19.1	12.4	43.4	46.4	25.5
Cash renter	: 27	22.4	22.8	16.5	56.6	57.6	43.0

Table 19.- Types of purchasing contracts held by 500 new ground farmers in North Louisiana Delta, 1938-39

Types of purchasing contracts	Total		White		Negro	
	:		:		:	
	: Number	: Percent	: Number	: Percent	: Number	: Percent
Total	: 500	100.0	400	100.0	100	100.0
Contract No. 1:	22	4.4	22	5.5	-	-
Contract No. 2:	376	75.2	325	81.3	51	51.0
Contract No. 3:	21	4.2	21	5.2	-	-
Contract No. 4:	2	0.4	2	0.5	-	-
Contract No. 5:	1	0.2	-	-	1	1.0
Contract No. 6:	2	0.4	-	-	2	2.0
Contract No. 7:	11	2.2	-	-	11	11.0
Contract No. 8:	2	0.4	2	0.5	-	-
Not reported	: 63	12.6	28	7.0	35	35.0

\*See discussion on Terms of Purchasing Contracts for a description of the types on page 31.



Table 20.- Source of money for down payments by 500 new ground farmers by race

Source of money for down payment	Total		White		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	500	100.0	400	80.0	100	20.0
No down payment	465	93.0	377	94.3	88	88.0
Savings	28	5.6	17	4.2	11	11.0
Soldier's bonus	2	0.4	2	0.5	-	-
Borrowed	2	0.4	2	0.5	-	-
Other	3	0.6	2	0.5	1	1.0



Table 21.- Agencies and interest rates charged for furnishing new ground farmers during first year as owner by race, 1938-39

Agencies and interest rates charged	Total		White		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	500	100.0	400	100.0	100	100.0
<u>Bank</u>						
Total	19	3.8	19	4.7	-	-
Interest rate percent						
4 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0.2	1	0.2	-	-
6	8	1.6	8	2.0	-	-
8	10	2.0	10	2.5	-	-
<u>Merchant</u>						
Total	318	63.6	239	59.9	79	79.0
Interest rate percent						
6	4	0.8	3	0.8	1	1.0
8	2	0.4	2	0.5	-	-
10	41	8.2	37	9.3	4	4.0
12	135	27.0	122	30.5	13	13.0
15	89	17.8	55	13.8	34	34.0
20 or more	47	9.4	20	5.0	27	27.0
<u>Farm Security Adminis.</u>						
Total	68	13.6	57	14.3	11	11.0
Interest rate percent						
4	24	4.8	19	4.8	5	5.0
4 $\frac{1}{2}$	10	2.0	10	2.5	-	-
5	34	6.8	28	7.0	6	6.0
<u>Farm Credit</u>						
Total	29	5.8	25	6.2	4	4.0
Interest rate percent						
4	29	5.8	25	6.2	4	4.0
<u>Other</u>						
Total	8	1.6	8	2.0	-	-
Interest rate percent						
4 $\frac{1}{2}$	4	0.8	4	1.0	-	-
5	3	0.6	3	0.8	-	-
6	1	0.2	1	0.2	-	-
<u>Not furnished first year as owner</u>						
	58	11.6	52	12.9	6	6.0



Table 22.- Average cash income from all sources of 500 new ground families by race, 1939

Source of income:	Total		White		Negro	
	Families	Average	Families	Average	Families	Average
	reporting:	income	reporting:	income	reporting:	income
	Number	Dollars	Number	Dollars	Number	Dollars
Total	427	255.94	362	270.09	65	177.18
Cash jobs	22	172.64	19	176.73	3	146.66
Crop sales	423	238.88	358	251.98	65	166.75
Livestock sales	38	33.58	34	35.88	4	14.00
Livestock prod. sales	65	20.62	53	21.85	12	15.17
Relief	21	72.62	21	72.62	-	-

Table 23.- Number of new ground families residing in houses having specified number of rooms, by race, 1939

Number of rooms	Total		White		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	500	100.0	400	100.0	100	100.0
One <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	21	4.2	6	1.5	15	15.0
Two	121	24.2	70	17.5	51	51.0
Three	165	33.0	141	35.3	24	24.0
Four	153	30.6	145	36.3	8	8.0
Five	33	6.6	31	7.7	2	2.0
Over five	7	1.4	7	1.7	-	-

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> One tent occupied by a white family included in this group.



Table 24.- Number of houses of new ground families having glassed windows, by race

Condition of windows	Total		White		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	500	100.0	400	100.0	100	100.0
None glassed	151	30.2	92	23.0	59	59.0
Some glassed	109	21.8	99	24.8	10	10.0
All glassed	237	47.4	206	51.5	31	31.0
No windows	3	0.6	3	0.7	0	0.0

Table 25.- Number of houses of new ground families having screened windows, by race

Condition of windows	Total		White		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	500	100.0	400	100.0	100	100.0
None screened	208	41.6	127	31.8	81	81.0
Some screened	137	27.4	130	32.5	7	7.0
All screened	152	30.4	140	35.0	12	12.0
No windows	3	0.6	3	0.7	0	0.0

Table 26.- Homes of new ground families having specified household equipment and conveniences, by race

Household conveniences	Total		White		Negro	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	500	-	400	-	100	-
Electricity	1	0.2	1	0.3	0	-
Screened porch	72	14.4	71	17.8	1	1.0
Radio	13	2.6	13	3.3	0	-
Newspaper	275	55.0	264	66.0	11	11.0
Sewing machine	203	40.6	181	45.3	22	22.0
Ice box	93	18.6	91	22.8	2	2.0
Phonograph	69	13.8	60	15.0	9	9.0
Running water	2	0.4	2	0.5	0	-



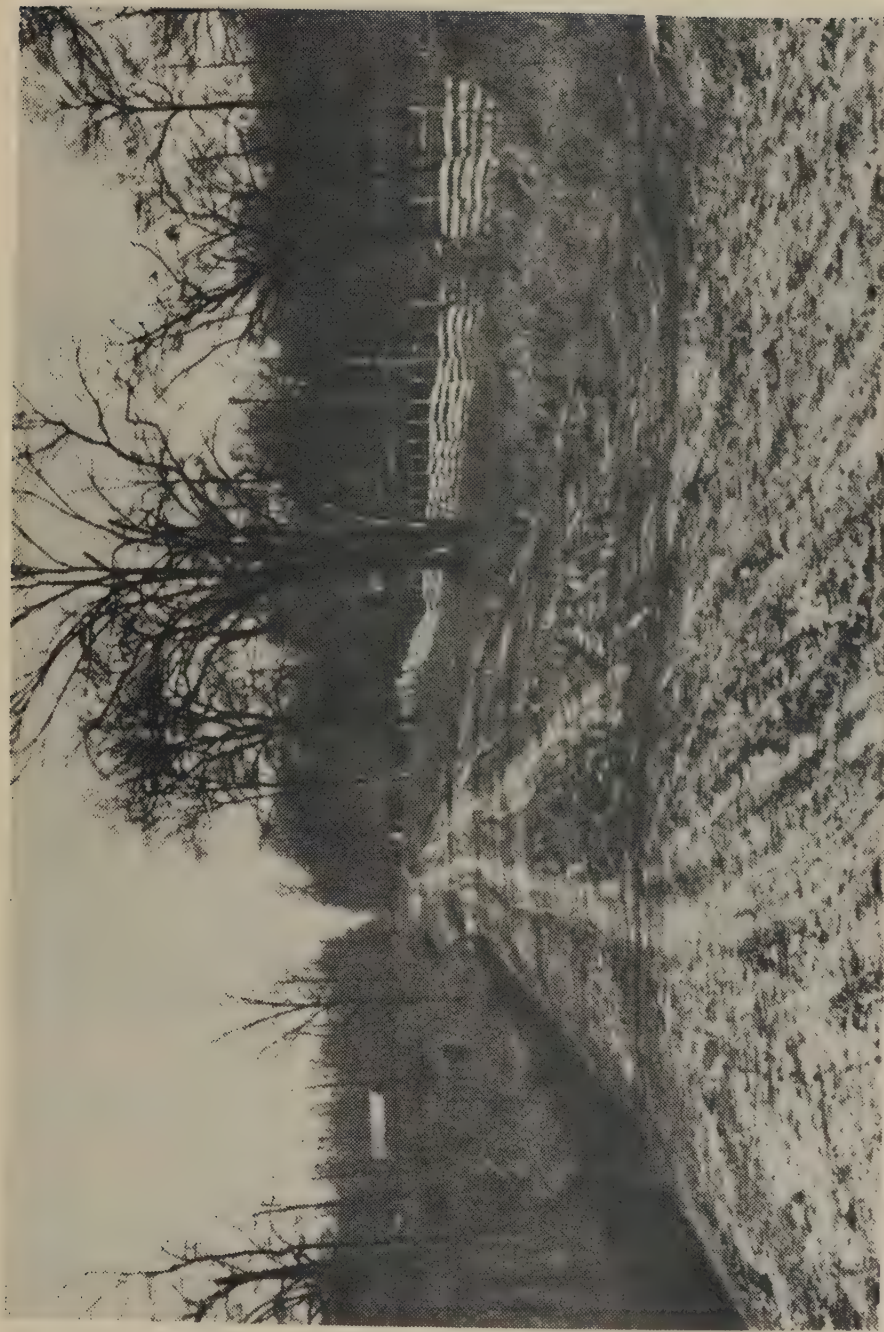


Figure 2.- Typical new-ground landscape. Lateral trails, many of which are inaccessible by automobile, lead from this newly constructed road back into the woods to the houses of the more remote settlers.



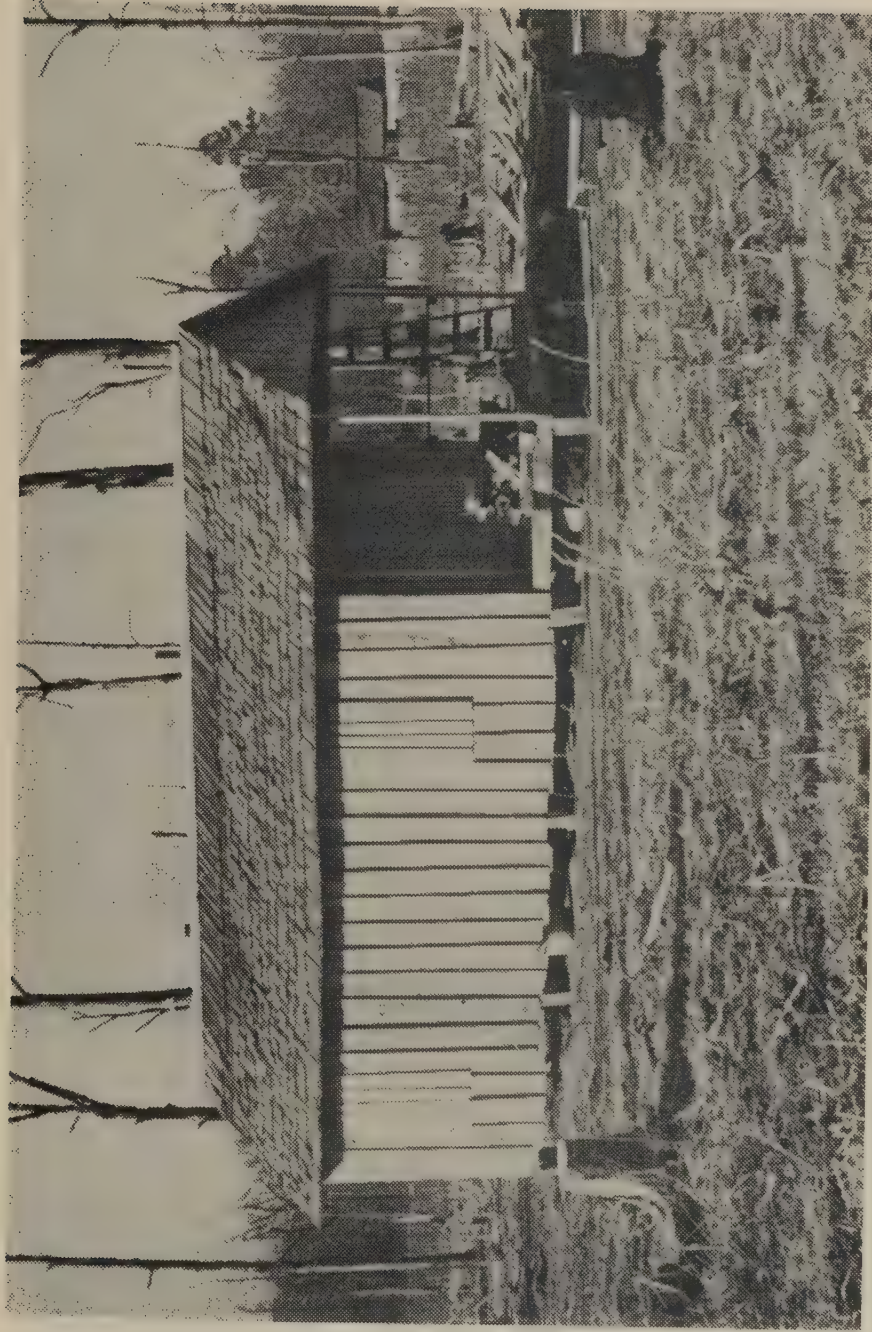


Figure 3.- Typical new-ground settler's house without screened or glassed windows. A fifth of the whites and a fourth of the Negroes occupy houses with only one or two rooms.





Figure 4.- Although largely uncleared, this land has already grown a crop of cotton. Cotton stalks are in the foreground and the trees are circled for cutting.

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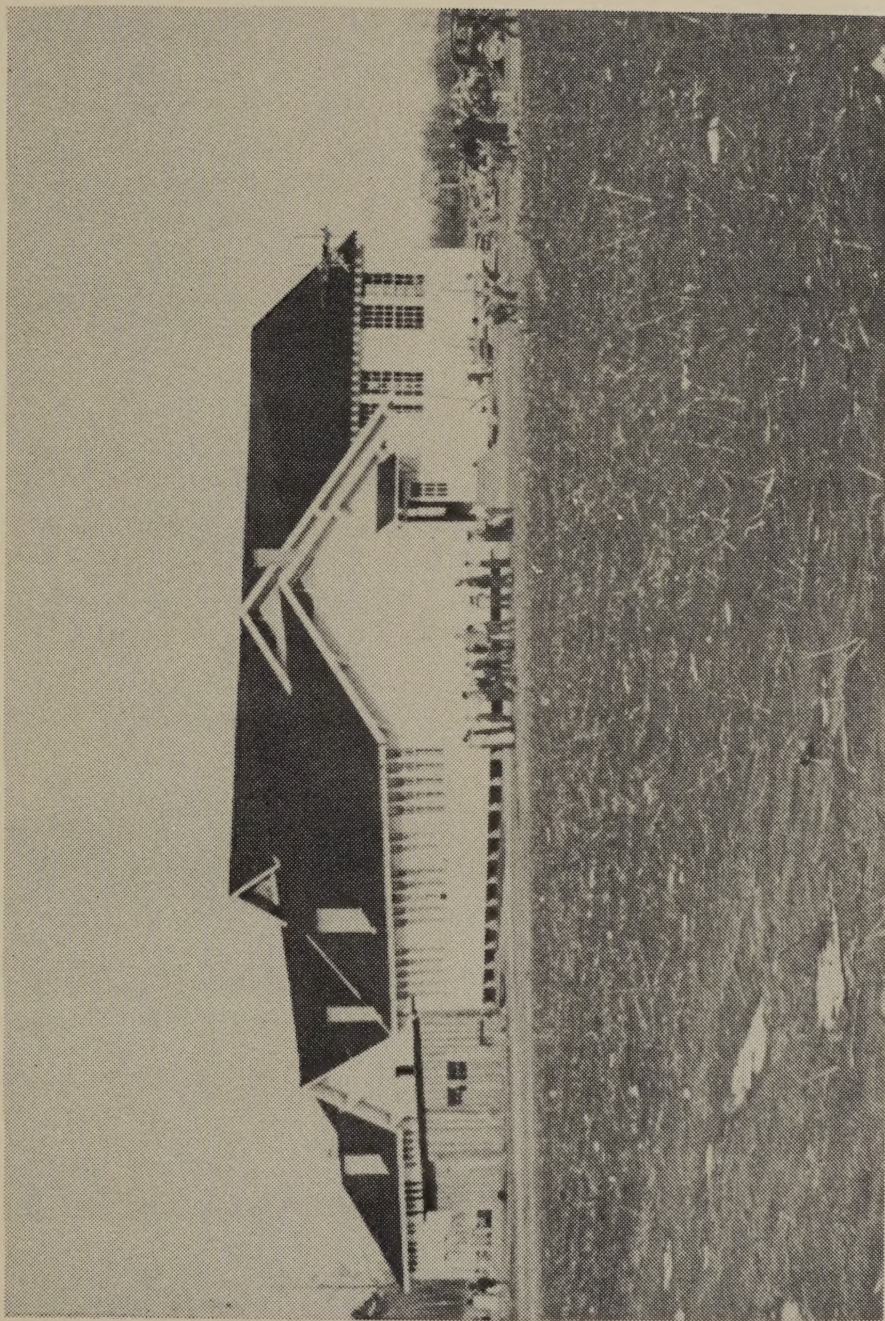


Figure 5.- This new and larger consolidated school was built  
to care for the settlers' children.

